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The Skulldugger

A Pointy Hat Rogue Lich

"What it means to be a skulldugger is to be hated by both the living and the dead. Products of necromancy are seldom afforded kindness among the living, as the association with the most maligned school of magic invokes images not too pleasant to the average mortal, but in truth, a skulldugger does not pose an inherent threat to the living. Liches, on the other hand, have a much better reason for their hatred of the Rogue lich, as skulldduggers are the only liches that make other liches their prey: A high undead parasite to the highest of undead.

"This parasitism starts at the beginning of a Skulldugger's unlife. To become a lich, a Rogue must foil another lich-to-be's ritual. There is no set method for this, as there are as many paths to lichdom as there are liches. A skulldugger-to-be could pass themselves off as a member of a forsworn's order, the sworn knights of a Paladin looking to become a lich, and then, instead on falling on their sword, take the necromantic power generated by the ritual for themselves. The skulldugger-to-be could foil the ritualistic mummification of a Monk lich by ending the life of the future soul incarnate right before it attains self-sustenance, or dispatch the martyrs of a Cleric's ceremony to become an apotheosis. The victim does not matter; what is important is stopping the ritual, for stopping a ritual is the ritual to become a Rogue lich. If the Rogue's scheme is successful, the Rogue disappears, and a skulldugger rises in their place.

"But a Skulldugger's parasitism doesn't end after it has attained lichdom. This relationship is at the core of their existence, for a skulldugger cannot form its own spirit jars. Much like a skulldugger-to-be must foil the plans of another lich-to-be to become a lich, a skulldugger must foil the plans of a lich to continue being a lich. A skulldugger must find the spirit jar of a lich and infest it with a piece of its own soul. The soul of the skulldugger then, in time, replaces the soul of the original lich trapped in the jar; and so, that spirit jar becomes that of the skulldugger, not of the lich that actually made it. The skulldugger lives up to its roguish reputation by literally stealing a spirit jar from another lich.

"The more a lich has divided its own soul, the easier it is for a skulldugger to infest any of its spirit jars, as less of a soul is present to fight the influence of the skulldugger. This is why skulldduggers rarely infect the jars of Ranger, Monk, or Druid liches, or any of the liches whose method to attain lichdom doesn't involve the division of the soul into many spirit jars. They go instead for the spirit jars of former Bards, Barbarians, or Sorcerers, those that ensure their undeath by dividing their souls into many small pieces.

"And so, a skulldugger lives on as a true parasite of undeath, stealing the work of other liches and undermining their attempts at perfect unlife. This garners the hatred of all other liches, as, by virtue of their own lichdom, skulldduggers are their natural enemies—and the adulation of those who hate liches. There has been many a tale depicting skulldduggers as dashing rogues, defeating liches and taking what's theirs, but the reports of skulldduggers as roguish defenders of all that is good are greatly exaggerated. A skulldugger does not benefit from a lich disappearing, since liches are few in number. The more liches exist, the more spirit jars a skulldugger can parasitize. It's therefore in the best interest of the skulldugger to undermine a lich, but not to outright end its undeath; to track which of its brethren still cling on to life, always looking for the next soul jar to steal; and to be ever mindful of not taking too many from the same source. After all, a parasite, however powerful, cannot live on without a host."

SKULLDUGGER

Medium Undead (Rogue), Any Alignment

AC 20
HP 300 (40d8 + 120)
Speed 40 ft.

Initiative +6 (16)

	MOD	SAVE		MOD	SAVE		MOD	SAVE
STR 14	+2	+2	**DEX** 22	+6	+13	**CON** 18	+4	+4
INT 18	+4	+11	**WIS** 14	+2	+2	**CHA** 16	+3	+3

Skills Deception +10, Perception +9, Sleight of Hand +20, Stealth +20
Resistances Cold, Lightning
Immunities Necrotic, Poison; Charmed, Exhaustion, Frightened, Paralyzed, Poisoned
Senses Truesight 120 ft.; passive Perception 19
Languages Common plus two other languages
Challenge 21 (33,000 XP; PB +7)

Traits

Cunning Strike. If the skulldugger hits a creature with an attack roll and it has Advantage on the roll or if one of the skulldugger's allies is within 5 feet of the target, it deals 35 (10d6) extra Necrotic damage. The skulldugger can instead choose to deal 17 (5d6) extra Necrotic damage and create one of the following effects:

- Daze. The target can only do one of the following during its next turn: move or take an action or a Bonus Action.
- Poison: The target has the Poisoned condition until the end of its next turn.
- Trip: The creature has the Prone condition.
- Withdraw: The skulldugger moves up to half its speed without provoking Opportunity Attacks.

Evasion. If the skulldugger is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, it takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw and only half damage if it fails. It can't use this trait if it has the Incapacitated condition.

Legendary Resistance (4/Day). If the skulldugger fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Skulldugger Resurrection. If destroyed, the skulldugger reforms in 1d10 days if it has a spirit jar, reviving with all its Hit Points. The new body appears in an unoccupied space in a location familiar to the skulldugger.

Actions

Multiattack. The skulldugger makes two attacks, using Sly Burst or Sly Slash in any combination.

Sly Burst. *Ranged Attack Roll:* +13 to hit, range 40 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d12 + 6) piercing damage.

Sly Slash. *Melee Attack Roll:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 25 (3d12 + 6) Slashing damage.

Bonus Actions

Cunning Action. The skulldugger takes the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Reactions

Uncanny Dodge. *Trigger:* The skulldugger is hit by an attack roll. *Response:* The skulldugger halves the damage (round down) it takes from that attack.

Legendary Actions

Legendary Action Uses: 3. Immediately after another creature's turn, the skulldugger can expend a use to take one of the following actions. The skulldugger regains all expended uses at the start of each of its turns.

Hide in Plain Sight. The skulldugger immediately takes the Hide action, rolling its Stealth skill check at Advantage.

Sly Riposte. The skulldugger makes a Sly Burst or a Sly Slash attack.

Still as a Corpse (costs 2 actions). The skulldugger gives itself Advantage on all attack rolls it makes until the end of its next turn.

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